REPRESENTATION

OF THE

MODE OF DEALING

BETWEEN THE

GENTLEMEN and FISHERS in Shetland:

In ANSWER to a Paragraph

IN THE

EDINBURGH ADVERTISER 4th Jan. 1811.

Sands.

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REMARKS

ON A PARAGRAPH IN THE

EDINBURGH ADVERTISER.

HAVING obſerved, in the Edinburgh Advertiſer of the 4th of January laſt, a paragraph, (from what authority inſerted is not told) wherein the oppreſſion under which the fiſhermen, inhabitants of the Shetland iſlands, are ſaid to labour, is repreſented as diſgraceful to ſubjects of the Britiſh empire; in order to reſiſt, and (it is hoped) to defeat ſo envenomed a calumny, the following brief ſtate of agriculture in theſe iſlands, and fiſheries on that coaſt, as well as of the people carrying on the ſame, is laid before an impartial public.

The whole arable grounds conſiſt of about 14,000 acres, (or merks land) as they are here called, from the produce whereof near 20,000 people are to be ſupported. The quantity of land farmed by each perſon is generally ſmall. It will eaſily be believed, that, in a climate ſo unfavourable to vegetation, the lean oats and big (barley,)

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which is the only grain theſe lands produce, will, in the beſt ſeaſons, fall ſhort of the ſupport neceſſary for the inhabitants. What then muſt be the ſhort-coming in bad ſeaſons, ſuch as the laſt three? In 1782 the whole produce of the country did not afford four months ſubſiſtence for the natives. In 1783 it was ſtill leſs: and the crop 1784, though it has yielded more fodder, will not be more productive of grain than that of 1783. In the end of the laſt-mentioned year, and beginning of 1784, near one half of all the black cattle periſhed; great numbers of ſheep and horſes alſo died; partly owing to diſeaſe, but chiefly to want. Thus the meaſure of their diſtreſſes became full. By three crops failing ſucceſſively, and by the loſs of cattle, the wretched inhabitants have been reduced to the utmoſt diſtreſs. Had not a merciful and attentive Legiſlature, and a humane and generous public, ſent in large ſupplies, hundreds muſt have periſhed for want. Some did periſh before theſe benefactions took effect; as the veſſels on board which the charities were load, as well as a veſſel or

two freighted for account of the land-holders, were long detained by contrary winds. And it is much to be feared many more will periſh through the courſe of the enſuing year, becauſe many were not able to preſerve ſeed-corn for the laſt year. Hence a large ſhare of the arable grounds are laid lee; and at this day, in one of the northern iſlands, there are 17 families without corn, without cattle, and deſtitute of the means of purchaſing one ounce of proviſions. Previous to theſe public benefactions, the proprietors of the iſlands had exerted every nerve, and drained every reſource to ſupport their tenants and dependents. Large ſums were laid out in procuring proviſions; and at the moſt pinching and ſcarce periods of theſe years, oat-meal never exceeded 6*s*. 8*d*. per liſpound, conſiſting of 30 lb. Amſterdam weight. For ſome time back it has been ſold at 5*s*. per liſpound. The hiſtory of theſe public ſupplies, particularly that through his Majeſty's immediate recommendation to parliament, that by Sir Thomas Dundaſs, and thoſe raiſed by voluntary donations in Eng-

land, are ſo well known, that they need not be enlarged on here. The inhabitants, to a man, have the moſt grateful ſenſe of theſe humane and well-timed charities.

What is thus repreſented will the more readily meet belief, when the public is aſſured, that the landholders have received *little* or no rents for theſe three years. With reſpect to fiſheries, your paragraph-writer muſt, at leaſt ought to have known, that there never was a ſalmon fiſhery on the coaſts of theſe iſlands: And as to the herring fiſhery, although in the ſummer ſeaſon the ſea hereabout is always full of herrings, yet the attempts to take them at that time by the natives have been very languid, not indeed deſerving notice. It requires a large capital, ſkill, and perſeverance, to make this branch of the fiſhery lucrative. We have this to learn of our neighbours the Dutch, who have long enriched themſelves at our expence. Indeed, ſometimes in the autumn, herrings have ſet into the harbours and creeks among the iſlands, and a ſmall cargo or two have been taken; but

this happens very ſeldom. A few ſeath or coal fiſh are caught off the ſouth end of the iſland, but their value is ſo ſmall it hardly deſerves notice.

The only branch of the fiſhery carried on to any extent on theſe coaſts by the natives is the white, or ling, tuſk, and cod-fiſhery. Boats conſtructed in Norway, and brought from thence in boards, are here put together, and when properly fitted, are perhaps the beſt adapted for that buſineſs of any thing that could be deviſed. They are generally about 18 feet keel, alike at both ends, the boards very thin, and are rowed and ſail'd by ſix men. They have been often caught at ſea by gales of wind, and have rowed on ſhore from the diſtance of 12 or 14 leagues; according to that part of the iſlands off which they fiſh, they uſe a greater or leſs ſtretch of lines. Upon the north-weſt part many boats uſe 120 lines of about 55 fathoms each, coſting 1*s.* 8*d.* *per* line. Upon other parts of the coaſt they do not uſe more than from 50 to 80 lines, each boat; the hooks on the lines are fixed at from 3 to 5 fathoms diſtance from

each other. The expence of fitting out ſuch boats is very conſiderable. One carrying 100 lines (or bughts as the fiſhermen call them,) will coſt about 20*l.* Sterling. They are furniſhed and fitted compleatly for ſea at the expence of the proprietors of the country, and are given to their tenants nearly at what they coſt themſelves. Fiſhing lines are almoſt always furniſhed below prime coſt. Each boat is divided into ſixths, or ſhares; ſometimes one tenant takes 3 or 4 ſhares, at other times there is a tenant to each ſhare. In ſome boats the proprietors retain 2 or 3 ſhares, and hire men, (not tenants) to whom high wages are given. It is not uncommon for a landlord to ſink among his tenants annually a ſum equivalent to 4 or 5 years real rents of his lands, before a ſingle boat proceeds to ſea, in hopes to be reimburſed by the ſucceſs of the fiſhing. But theſe hopes are often baulked; and it has happened that he has loſt the money thus advanced, for ſeveral years together. The ſummer fiſhing begins about the 1ſt of June, and ends about the 1ſt of Auguſt. As the boats muſt

row from ſtations neareſt to the fiſhing banks, moſt of the fiſhermen are from home the greater part of this time. Few of the tenants can furniſh oatmeal for themſelves during this period, and the hired or fied men never do. Thus the proprietor is obliged to diſburſe conſiderable ſums for this article, which is always furniſhed to them on the moſt reaſonable terms. The arable lands, as was before obſerved, are parcelled out in very ſmall quantities, and ſet at very low rents.

A farm or poſſeſſion conſiſting of ſix merks land, does not, in many parts of theſe iſlands, pay more than 18*s.* Sterling to the proprietor. A contract between the maſter and tenant takes place; the one party giving the lands on theſe very moderate terms, on condition that the other ſhall fiſh for him; and it is believed, that, in no part of the kingdom, a fiſherman has a houſe, firing, ſeveral acres of arable grounds, paſture for ſeveral hundred ſheep, beſide horſes and black cattle, for payment of, from 25 to 30 ſhillings *per annum*, but in Shetland alone.

At the end of the ſeaſon accounts

are ſettled. From the tenant's ſhare of the ſummer's fiſhing, his land-rent and the articles furniſhed him are deducted, and the balance, (if any be due) is paid in caſh. The price given, or allowed to the fiſherman, ſeems to be the grand article to which oppreſſion is imputed in the Advertiſer. This deſerves a particular explanation, in order to undeceive the public. From about the beginning of this century, to the year 1759, nearly all the fiſh caught here were carried to Hamburgh or Bremen, and ſeldom brought more than from 3 to 4 marks lubs *per* cwt. (each mark lubs is equal to 16*d.*) if they brought 6 marks it was reckoned a great price. During this whole period, 3*d.* was given for a ling, and 1*d.* for a tuſk, by the land-holders to the fiſhermen; which, with the expence of curing them, was nearly equal at moſt times, and not ſeldom, above the price they rendered at theſe markets; and there is reaſon to believe, that, had not Legiſlature interfered, by granting a bounty of 3*s.* *per* cwt. of marketable well-cured fiſh ſent to foreign markets, and that the fiſhing bu-

ſineſs was then conducted on a narrow ſcale, by uſing ſmall boats and few lines, that this trade would have been relinquiſhed altogether. In the 1759, ſome merchants in Greenock began to purchaſe ling-fiſh here for different markets in the Mediterranean, particularly for Barcelona; the price then roſe to 10*s*. 6*d*. *per* cwt. of well-cured and dried ling. A few years thereafter, a company of merchants in London began to purchaſe fiſh for theſe markets alſo; this occaſioned a further riſe in the price, ſo that in 1763 or 1764, they were ſold at 13*s*. *per* quintal. In conſequence of which, the land-holders immediately raiſed the price to 4*d*. for each freſh ling to their tenants; from thence to the year 1779 or 1780, the price of marketable fiſh kept hovering from 13*s*. to 14*s*. *per* cwt. during which time the price to the fiſhermen kept conſtantly riſing; 5*d*. 5½*d*. and 6*d*. each ling has been given, and to ſuch length did the rage for fiſh extend, about the beginning of the late war, when the price of well-cured fiſh had ſtarted to 14*s*. 6*d*. and 15*s*. *per* quintal, that ſome of the pro-

prietors gave 6*d.* each ling to their tenants, and furniſhed boats and lines beſide. This was frequently accompanied by premiums to excite emulation. The ſize of theſe fiſh is very unequal at all times, but for ſeveral years previous to 1779, on whatever part of the coaſt caught, they were remarkably ſmall. In ſome places, from 20 to 25, when properly cured and dried, weighed a quintal, in others, from 25 to 32. Paying, at leaſt, 5*d.* and often 6*d.* for theſe fiſh when freſh, it will eaſily be believed that little profit could acrue to the landlord. It is an eſtabliſhed fact, that 1 cwt. of green fiſh, without the head and guts, ſhrinks, in curing, pinning, and drying, three-fifths; ſo that allowing only 5*d.* for each green ling, of which, when dried, ſuppoſe 25 weigh 1 cwt. the price to the fiſherman and landlord ſtands thus, when fiſh ſold at 14*s.* 6*d.* per cwt. ten ſhillings and five pence to the former, and four and one penny to the latter; out of which 4*s.* 1*d.* the ſalt is to be paid, the expence of curing, which is very high, owing to the unfavourableneſs of the climate, thereby requiring

great attendance, and of conſequence many hands to be employed; beſide cuſtomhouſe-officers fees, and expence of tranſport from the fiſhing ſtations to the loading ports; which laſt is always high and often dangerous, a gentleman only a few years ago having loſt a large boat with 3000 ling on board.

The quantity of ſalt allowed to cure 1 cwt. of fiſh is half a buſhel of foreign, weighing 84 lb. per buſhel, and 3-4ths of a buſhel of Scots, weighing 56 lb. per buſhel. The price of the foreign, on an average, is about 2*s.* 6*d.* and of the Scots about 1*s.* 8*d.*—The matter being thus fairly ſtated, the public are left to judge, whether the landlord's profit be ſo great and unjuſt, as to entail miſery and ruin on the tenants. It is apprehended that the caſe is far otherwiſe. Few of the gentlemen are rich; many of the fiſhermen were comparatively ſo, before theſe years of famine. Several inſtances could be given, where a tenant, paying under 30*s.* *per annum* in name of landrent, was poſſeſſed of at leaſt 500 ſheep.—From the above ſtate of

the price of green fiſh, there are a few exceptions. As the fiſherman and his landlord are here underſtood (as before hinted) to have entered into a contract, whereby the fiſherman engages to fiſh to the landlord at a ſtipulated price, in conſideration whereof the landlord engages to ſet to the fiſherman ſuch a farm alſo at a ſtipulated price, it may be readily preſumed, that when the land-rent is not raiſed upon the tenant, the price of the fiſh ought not to be raiſed on the maſter; yet certain it is, that by far the greateſt part of the lands in the country have undergone no riſe of rent for a period long paſt the memory of man. At the ſame time, the price of fiſh having been raiſed to the maſter in manner above mentioned, he humanely raiſed it to the tenant, altho' by no means bound ſo to do, otherwiſe than reciprocally. —Still, perhaps, there may be found a few inſtances of the price of fiſh being 4*d.* each ling to the fiſherman, but this is very rare now. Little is here ſaid of the price of tuſk and cod. Until lately, the firſt was not carried to the Mediterranean; and of the laſt, ſo

few are caught, that they are not an object of any conſequence; yet whatever number are delivered by the fiſhermen, are paid for at a very good price. It is believed, that until tuſk became of equal value with ling, which is only a few years ſince, that a penny each was all that was given; and when their ſize and weight are compared with that of ling, this price was at leaſt in proportion. When any number of cod happened to be caught, 2*d.* and 2½*d.* each was given; but as they were never got in any quantities but in January and February, and theſe months being very improper for drying them, and the method of curing mud-fiſh not being well underſtood, thoſe who dealt in this branch almoſt always loſt money.

From the time that the London merchants began to buy fiſh may be dated the commencement of luxury in theſe iſlands. Some of them brought in large quantities of goods, ſuch as broad cloths, fine linens, hats, and other articles for mens apparel; others brought in chintz, bonnets, ſtays, laces, and all kinds of trinkets for wo-

men. Before this period, cloth manufactured in the country of the wool of their own ſheep cloathed the fiſhermen, and ſtuffs of the ſame materials the women. Even linen was then little uſed. Flannel of their own making was ſubſtituted. They then were ſeldom in debt, never in want, and often ſaved money. But from that period a fondneſs for gewgaws and finery has become univerſal, and is every day increaſing. At this day, the common people dreſs as fine and faſhionable as any of their rank in the kingdom.—In the town of Lerwick, about the year 1760, there was hardly an open ſhop, at leaſt there was not more than two or three, and theſe miſerably furniſhed; but now there is not leſs than a dozen, repleniſhed with every faſhionable and expenſive article of dreſs for both ſexes. It will naturally excite wonder, how people, "groaning under oppreſſion diſgraceful to Britiſh ſubjects," can afford to purchaſe ſuch fineries; nor will the wonder be diminiſhed, when the public is informed, that one of theſe ſhop-keepers did, in 1782, ſell of theſe commodities above

the value of 1000*l.* Sterling among the common people. And at this day the ſhops are as full of goods as at any time before, and trade ſtill appears to go on in them. The diſtreſſed ſtate of the country conſidered, it may be neceſſary to account for this. The tenants are ſo accuſtomed to depend on their landlords for the neceſſaries of life, that they look for ſupport as a matter of right. Even in theſe times of miſery and famine, ſo unhappily prevalent is the propenſity for dreſs and ſhew, that, in a manner regardleſs of the preſervation of the lives of their families, they lay out in ſhops their little earnings; throwing themſelves on their maſter's mercy for daily bread, while they are depriving him of the very means of yielding them ſuccour, by throwing away that money which ought to be applied to the payment of their debts to him. Were the inhabitants living in the ſtate of oppreſſion as the writer of the paragraph repreſents, this would not be the caſe; but what is here ſtated none will be hardy enough to deny. Some of the introducers of theſe luxuries ſettled in theſe

iſlands; others, who had before ſettled there, ſeeing the great profits accruing from the ſale of ſuch goods, forthwith commenced ſhop-keepers and pedlars. Many of the common people, not having always the command of money, yet being reſolved to be as fine as ſuch of their neighbours as had, begun to barter the fiſh, which they were bound by contract to give to their landlords, with theſe pedlars. By this means the landholders were not only defrauded of the fiſh, but of the very beſt fiſh. Goods at the retail value of 6*d.* was given for a large ling, which weighed, perhaps twice, often thrice the weight of many given to the maſter. The goods did not probably coſt 3*d.* which was thus valued at 6*d.* and for which they received a ling worth a ſhilling. From the above ſtate of matters it will be eaſily credited, that great quantities of the very beſt fiſh were picked up by theſe kind of people, while the very ſmalleſt only were left for the landlords. This account of the matter but ill agrees with that given in the advertiſer, where it is aſſerted, "that the fiſherman dares not conceal any fiſh;

for, ſhould he be detected in ſuch a crime, he would inſtantly be baniſhed the iſland." Yet the ſtate here given is incontravertibly true. About ſix years ago, theſe practices, ſo detrimental to the gentlemen, introduced a more equitable mode between the parties, which has now nearly become general. The fiſh are delivered freſh by the hundred weight, (heads off and guts out.) For every cwt. in this ſtate the landlord pays 3*s*. 6*d*.; and as in curing, pineing, and drying, they are reduced to 2-5ths of their weight when freſh, this bargain is fair and equal. Eight, and ſometimes nine ling in this ſtate weigh a cwt.; and as the fiſh when cured are always ſold by weight, the above method now meets univerſal approbation. About 3 years ago, the fiſh on the eaſt ſide of theſe iſlands were remarkably ſmall. In the neighbourhood of a gentleman of conſiderable landed property, there lives one of theſe ſhop-keepers, whoſe fiſh happened to be weighed on board the ſame ſhip, and at the ſame time with the other's fiſh: The gentleman's fiſh

weighed on an average 28 ling to the cwt. the ſhop-keeper's weighed 14.

The warehouſes which the landholders are repreſented "to keep filled with neceſſaries from Scotland, Hamburgh, and Holland," according to the paragraph-writer, himſelf can beſt give an account of. Every gentleman keeps a booth for houſing his fiſh when dry, and receiving oil and butter; but no other kind of goods, it is believed, are they ever occupied by; ſalt, tar, fiſhing-lines, and the other neceſſary apparatus for fiſhing excepted, which every landholder muſt provide his tenants with; but the "GOWNS, *&c.*" talked of are more probably ſold by the paragraph-writer himſelf. Tenants have been oppreſſed in theſe iſlands, greatly oppreſſed! but not by the landholders; it was by people of the above deſcription, ſome of whom procured leaſes of land, and left their oppreſſions upon record in the Sheriff-court. The gentlemen of the Shetland iſlands are, as far as the writer hereof knows, kind and humane to their tenants and dependents, and remarkably hoſpitable to ſtrangers.

It may not be amiſs here to ſtate to the public, that the ling, tuſk, and cod-fiſhery is not capable of being much extended or improven: For which opinion ſtrong reaſons can be brought, if neceſſary: But the great and profitable fiſhery is that of herrings, by the proper proſecution whereof, wealth would be got in peace, and many thouſands hardy ſeamen reared for the defence of their country in war. But this can only be done by well-digeſted plans, large capitals, and under the immediate inſpection and protection of government. With regard to the commutation of ſervices into a money-payment, it is alſo believed, that there is not a proprietor of lands in theſe iſlands who would not readily commute ſuch ſervices as are payable to them. It is not eaſily diſcovered how tenants fiſhing for their landlords, in conſequence of a mutual contract, can be called a ſervice, eſpecially when it is conſidered, that they are paid an equitable price for their fiſh, and have a houſe, firing, ſome acres of arable ground, and larger privileges for paſturing cattle than is any where elſe given in the king-

dom; and that upon only paying a few ſhillings in name of rent to the proprietor.

When theſe iſlands belonged to Denmark, the inhabitants paid a land-tax, under the name of ſcatt. When they became ſubject to the Scottiſh crown, this ſcatt continued to be paid, and over and above the ceſs afterwards laid on here, this ſcatt was ſtill demanded; ſo that at preſent (and indeed for many years back) the old Daniſh land-tax, or ſcatt, is paid to the donator of the crown, and the real land-tax, or ceſs, into the treaſury. Beſide this, there are other exactions payable to the crown's donator by the tenants, ſome of which certainly are oppreſſive. Tythes are alſo paid to the full extent allowed by law.

The real ſervices paid here are what the natives call days works. For each acre of arable ground they occupy, they are bound to ſend a perſon to work one day to the landlord, who always maintains the perſon ſent. Whenever the tenant has ſignified a wiſh to pay money inſtead of this ſervice, it has never been refuſed. One gentle-

man has ſet his whole eſtate to his tenants for a money-payment, ſo that they are as free, in effect, as any tenants in the kingdom. Others have attempted the ſame, but their tenants abſolutely refuſed to quit their preſent ſituation. Time only can diſcover the difference. It can hardly be doubted, but that the tenants in theſe iſlands would have been among the happieſt of their rank in the kingdom, would proper means have been fallen on to reſtrain the general propenſity to luxury of late ſo very prevalent.

The frequent failure of the crops is an irremediable evil, but when an extraordinary death of cattle does not happen at the ſame time, they generally get over the loſs of a ſingle crop without very bad conſequences. But when four ſucceſſive failures of the harveſts have happened, and a great ſhort-coming in the uſual quantities of ſmall fiſh, ſuch as haddocks, whitings, and ſillocks, (a ſpecies of the coal) beſides an extraordinary death among the ſheep and black cattle, their preſent moſt pitiable condition cannot be wondered at.

The Legiſlature's interference in recovering the herring-fiſhery on this coaſt out of the hands of its preſent unlawful poſſeſſors the Dutch, and employing the natives in it, might be the means of enriching not only them, but the whole nation.

No SHETLAND LAIRD.

SHETLAND,
Feb. 14. 1785.

COPY OF A LETTER

FROM

Mr JAMES SANDS, Miniſter, Lerwick,

TO

ALEXANDER ALISON, Eſq; of the Exciſe.

10th February, 1785.

SIR,

ON the 6th inſtant I received your eſteemed favour of the 22d ult. The letters you ſent me incloſed were, after peruſal, ſealed, and delivered to Mr Heddell.——The obligations this country lyes under to you and Mr Parker are truly great; they muſt be ſenſibly felt, and, I hope, gratefully remembered.

You obſerve, many are impreſſed with the idea, that the poverty and preſent diſtreſſes of this country are greatly aggravated by the oppreſſive meaſures of the landholders, and deſire me to write you my ſentiments on

this ſubject. This I ſhall do freely, and without reſerve, though, perhaps, not ſo diſtinctly and minutely as you may wiſh.—When I came firſt to this country, I conſidered the thirlage of tenants to their maſters, for the ſale of their fiſh, as oppreſſive and injurious; but, after eighteen years experience and obſervation, I am unable to point out any other mode that would be more advantageous to the tenants. I have ſeen, during theſe years, various trials made to improve the fiſhery, and to proſecute it on a different plan, but without ſucceſs, or any beneficial effects. The tenants and fiſhermen of Shetland generally purchaſe their neceſſaries where they pleaſe: They are, indeed, bound to ſell their tuſk and ling fiſh to their reſpective landlords, and that ſomewhat cheaper than they might to others; but to compenſate this, they generally enjoy their little poſſeſſions for the ſame rent that was paid by their fathers and grandfathers, tho' the price at which they ſell their horſes, horned-cattle, ſheep, *&c.* has advanced, I may venture to ſay, fifty *per cent.* within theſe laſt thirty years;

and in times of ſcarcity they are not only ſupplied on credit by their landlords with meal, imported for the purpoſe from other countries, but are generally allowed to ſit without any rigorous exaction of their rents, and often without the payment of a ſingle penny. Their paſture-grounds are very extenſive, they may keep what number of ſheep and horſes they pleaſe; but, in order to increaſe the number of fiſhermen, their arable lands have been divided into very ſmall poſſeſſions. This is an evil now ſeverely felt both by maſter and tenant; but I fear it will neither be ſoon nor eaſily remedied, as the tenants are poor, and unable to provide ſtock for labouring on a more enlarged plan; and as few of the landlords are able to aſſiſt in promoting the wiſhed-for alteration, their credit being, in a great meaſure, exhauſted, by ſupplying their tenants in three ſucceſſive years of famine.—Upon the whole, I muſt ſay, that though the ſyſtem of management that has obtained in theſe iſlands may wear the appearance of oppreſſion, it is not often followed with its pernicious effects;

and that in years when the earth yields its uſual increaſe, the poorer ſort live as comfortably here as in any of the northern counties of Scotland, and far more luxuriouſly.

You alſo deſire me to point out what I think might tend to the proſperity of Shetland;—and on this head the firſt thing that occurs is the herring-fiſhery. I every ſummer ſee the Dutch, Danes, Pruſſians, French, and Flemiſh, proſecuting this fiſhery on our coaſts, while there is not one veſſel belonging to the country, or any other part of the Britiſh dominions, employed in the buſineſs.—This fiſhery was once attempted from England on a very extenſive plan, and carried on for ſome years with remarkable ſucceſs, and many peculiar advantages; and the reaſons for which it was dropped, and is now altogether neglected, I have not been able to inveſtigate. I cannot ſay I ever heard the maſters of the Engliſh herring-buſhes complain for want of fiſh, but often, towards the end of the ſeaſon, from the ſcarcity of caſk and ſalt. The revival of this fiſhery is, no doubt, an object worthy the

national attention, as it would not only give employment to many thouſands, who muſt otherwiſe leave the kingdom to ſeek for bread, but would alſo prove a valuable nurſery for ſeamen. The Greenland whale-fiſhery too might be carried on from Shetland to more advantage than from any of the ſouthern parts of Britain: But there are no funds in this country adequate to ſuch an undertaking. I have heard thoſe who are well experienced in this buſineſs ſay, that from Shetland there would be a ſaving at leaſt of ſix weeks wages and maintenance on every voyage, and that the bounty granted on the meaſurement of the ſhips would ſufficiently defray the whole expence. This fiſhery would open a good market for our beef, mutton, pork, and potatoes, and would conſequently tend much to the cultivation of the ground.

A manufacture of coarſe woolen cloth eſtabliſhed in this country would be attended with general benefit. Wool is one of our ſtaple commodities, and I am ſorry to ſay it is moſt ſhamefully abuſed; the greateſt part of it being made into ſtockings, and theſe exported

to foreign markets, where they ſeldom give above five-pence per pair, and are ſometimes ſold at two-pence and three-pence per pair, while the inhabitants of the country have almoſt all the cloth they wear from Leith and Edinburgh; a circumſtance that contributes to their poverty in no ſmall degree. The neglect, and indeed I may ſay the total want of manufactures, is ſeverely felt in this country, and eſpecially in Lerwick, which is the reſort of the deſtitute from the other pariſhes. I have on my liſt for this town above two hundred families; and I ſpeak within bounds, when I ſay, that a full half of theſe are without employment, or any viſible means of ſubſiſtence. They are thrown on the humanity of the other half, and are, in the beſt of years, an inſupportable burden.

Before I conclude, I muſt obſerve, that we ſend great numbers yearly into the ſea-ſervice, who, though they are generally ſharp and lively, ſeldom attain to preferment, and this from the want of proper education. I have long wiſhed to ſee a ſchool eſtabliſhed here for teaching thoſe branches that are

eſſential to prepare youth for this line of life; but unleſs it becomes an object of public attention, I deſpair of ſeeing it take place. I am confident that ſuch an eſtabliſhment, under proper management, would prove a moſt uſeful and valuable acquiſition; by means of which, many of our young men might riſe in the world, ſo as to be of ſervice to their country and friends.

I immediately forwarded Sir Alexander Dick's card to Mr M'Robert, but have not heard from him ſince.—I have therefore given you my ſentiments reſpecting Shetland, without conſulting any perſon on the ſubject. Mr M'Robert will, no doubt, give you his alſo and I hope we will not be found to differ in any material point.

When my circumſtances can admit of my viſiting the metropolis, I will do myſelf the pleaſure of waiting on you, and in the mean time I moſt heartily thank you for your polite invitation.

I am, with very great eſteem,
SIR,
Your obedient ſervant,
JAMES SANDS.